

RASHIED

ARAEEN

**Grosvenor
Gallery**

ABU DHABI ART

BOOTH M6 | 15 - 21 NOVEMBER 2021



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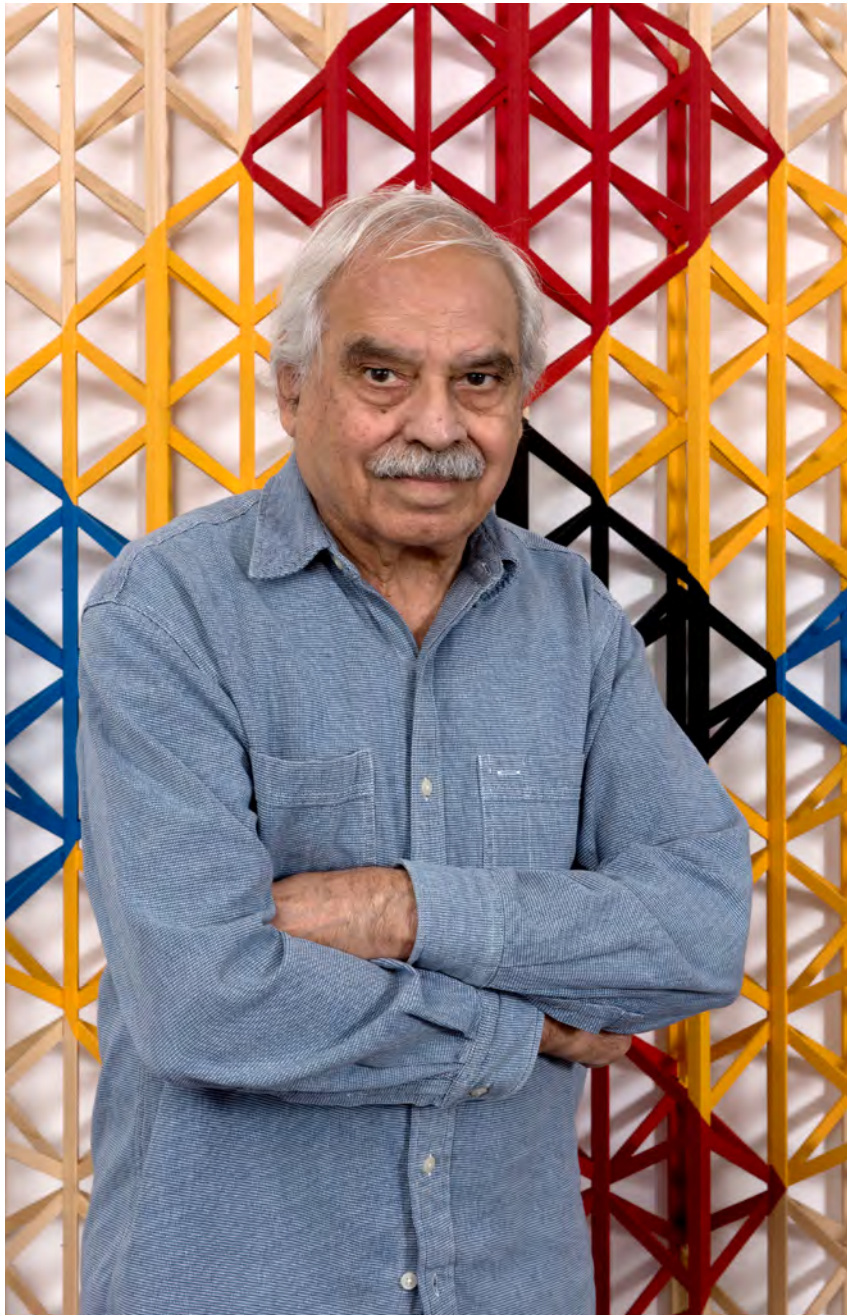
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RASHEED ARAEEN

ABU DHABI: 2021

Interviewed by Aravin Sandran



Left
The Greatness
of Allah, 2021
(detail)

“My life has been a struggle against the establishment.”
You said that during an interview with The Guardian in
January 2020. Do you feel the same sentiments today more
than a year later or have you reconciled with the past?

I’m still struggling against the establishment. It is a struggle against Eurocentrism for which the white artist is still central to modernism; and the artists of Asian and African origins are either treated as marginals or kept excluded from the mainstream. Although the things have now somewhat changed with globalisation, as the art market now accept artists from all over the world and they are promoted on an equal basis, history of modernism is still exclusively of the achievements of white artists.

Shamiyaana refers to an Indian ceremonial tent in the
Bengali language. What was the rationale behind this choice
of name for this artwork?

Shamiyaana is a sort of tent or marquee which is used for marriage ceremonies in the Indian subcontinent. I've the memory of marriages in my family in Karachi. A shamiyaana would be erected in front of our house in which guests would be welcomed and food served to them. These shamiyaanas were beautiful as they were decorated with colourful geometric designs. Alas, marriages no longer take place in these shamiyaana. It is the memory of these bygone traditions of shamianas which is the basis of my artworks now called *Shamiyaana*. It was first created in Athens and now in London.

You've presented Shamiyaana at documenta 14 in Athens in 2017 as well as in London in 2019. Have you approached its installation different each time, depending on the occasion, city and audience?

When I was invited to participate in Documenta 14, in 2017, particularly in Athens, it gave me an opportunity to fulfil my ambition to produce an artwork which would allow people to be part of it, not as an audience but as its creative participants or partners. Athens at the time was going through a crisis, not only of an unemployment of its own people but it also had to receive immigrants and refugees particularly from the Middle East; and then to feed them. It was the time and occasion when there would also be tourists, as well as the audience from all over the world for the Documenta, in Athens. The artistic aim of *Shamiyaana* was therefore to bring all these people together; in fact, under one roof where they would meet, eat together and engage in conversations. This was exactly what

actually happened. People from all over the world, from different cultures and speaking different languages, tourists, art lovers or art audiences, refugees and immigrants, would meet the locals, rich and poor, sit on the same table and eat together; and, in fact, would try to talk to each other even when they could not speak and understand each others languages.

Shamiyaana was meant to be an open-ended and continuous artwork, but it could not fulfil this ambition in Athens. After 4 months, it had to be dismantled and put in a storage, due to the limitations of finances and the non-availability of place which would allow it to be continuous. According to an art theory by Adorno, it had to go into hibernation until the right time when it would resurrect itself. An alternative to this was to create its another version, so that it could maintain its continuity conceptually. It was on this basis that a new *Shamiyaana* emerged in London. It has a different structure and operates materially in a different way, but its aims and ambition are the same, conceptually.

You consider cooking a "creative act". Which dish do you find to be the most creative with regards to its execution, presentation and consumption, and why?

Already in 1968, I had realized that art could and should be made with the participation of ordinary people. Since then I have developed many projects which not only require public participation but they should be part of everyday life. Food is basic to



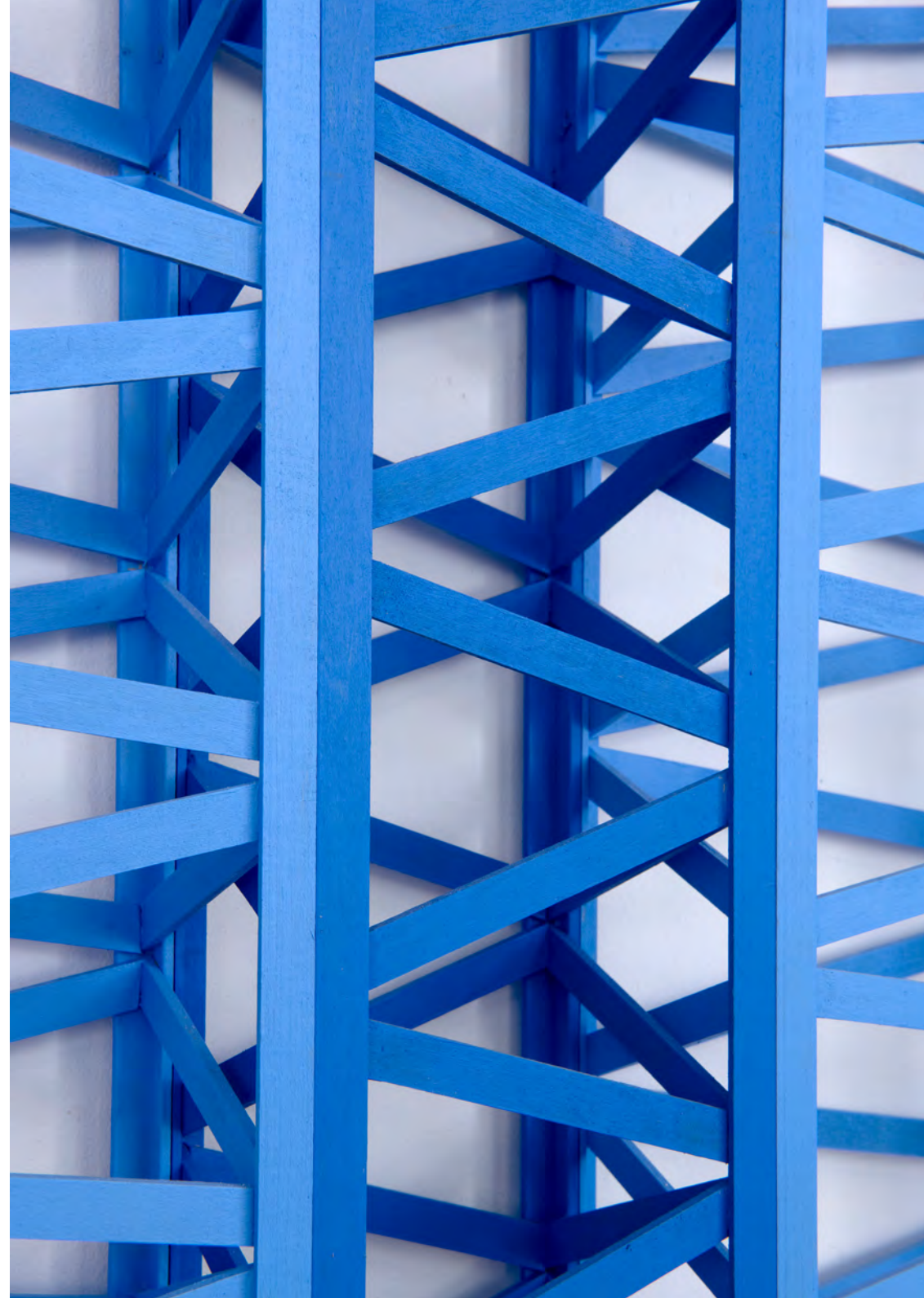
life, and the way it is consumed by humans involves creativity; and my aim is to adopt this creativity and transform it into a work of art with the participation of those who are involved in cooking and then eating it collectively. I have no preference for any particular dish. My preference is for whatever produced creatively.

You have championed the contributions of Muslims, Blacks, Pakistanis among other minority ethnic and community groups in Britain. Do you feel there has been progress with regards to inclusiveness and representation in the art world?

As I have said above, things have now changed and the artists from all over the world are accepted by the art establishment in the West. Moreover, many countries of Third World have now established or are developing their own art institutions, art galleries and museums, as well as their own art fairs and biennales. But, despite all this, the scholarship fundamental to the critical evaluation of art is still with the West, and thus the West continues to dominate and control the global art scene, as part of cultural imperialism.

What would you like audiences to take away from their experience at Abu Dhabi Art?

Besides what I have already said for question no 4, I would like the audience to feel that Islam has its own ideas of aesthetics, art and beauty, which should be maintained and protected.



1. Rasheed Araeen, b. 1935

Zig-Zag, 1972-2021

Signed and dated

Acrylic paint on Wood

72 x 72 x 5 in

182.9 x 182.9 x 12.7 cm

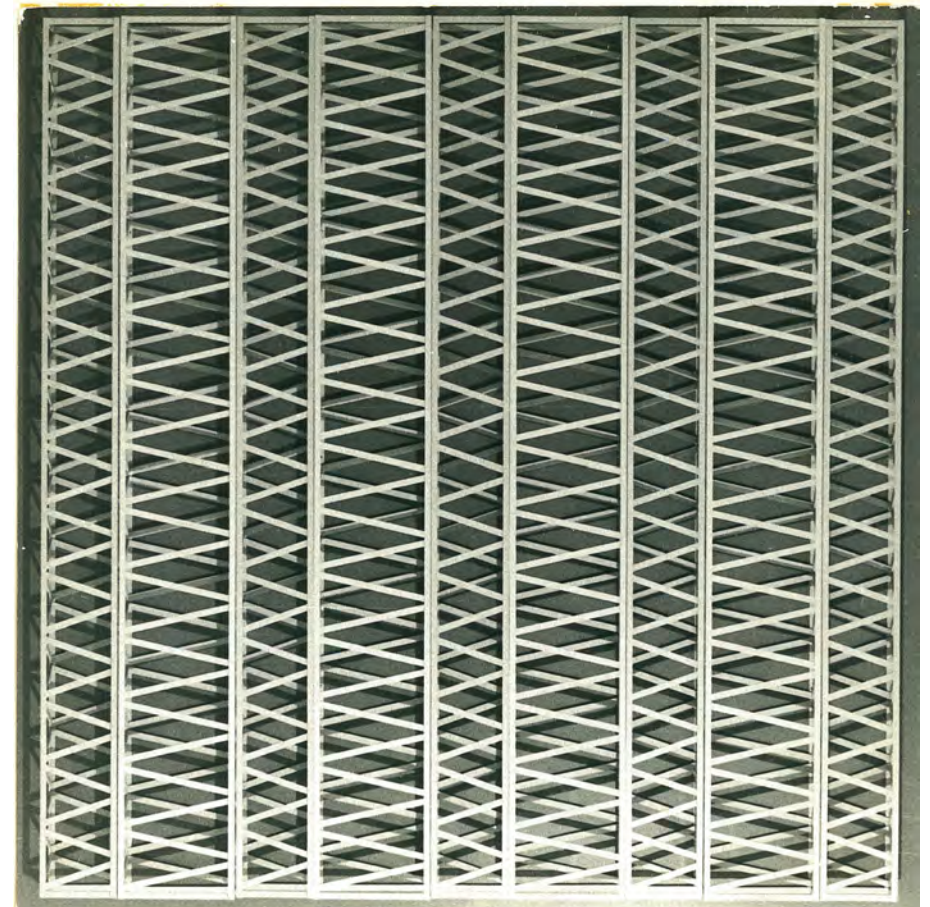
Original iteration of 'Zig-Zag' (destroyed)

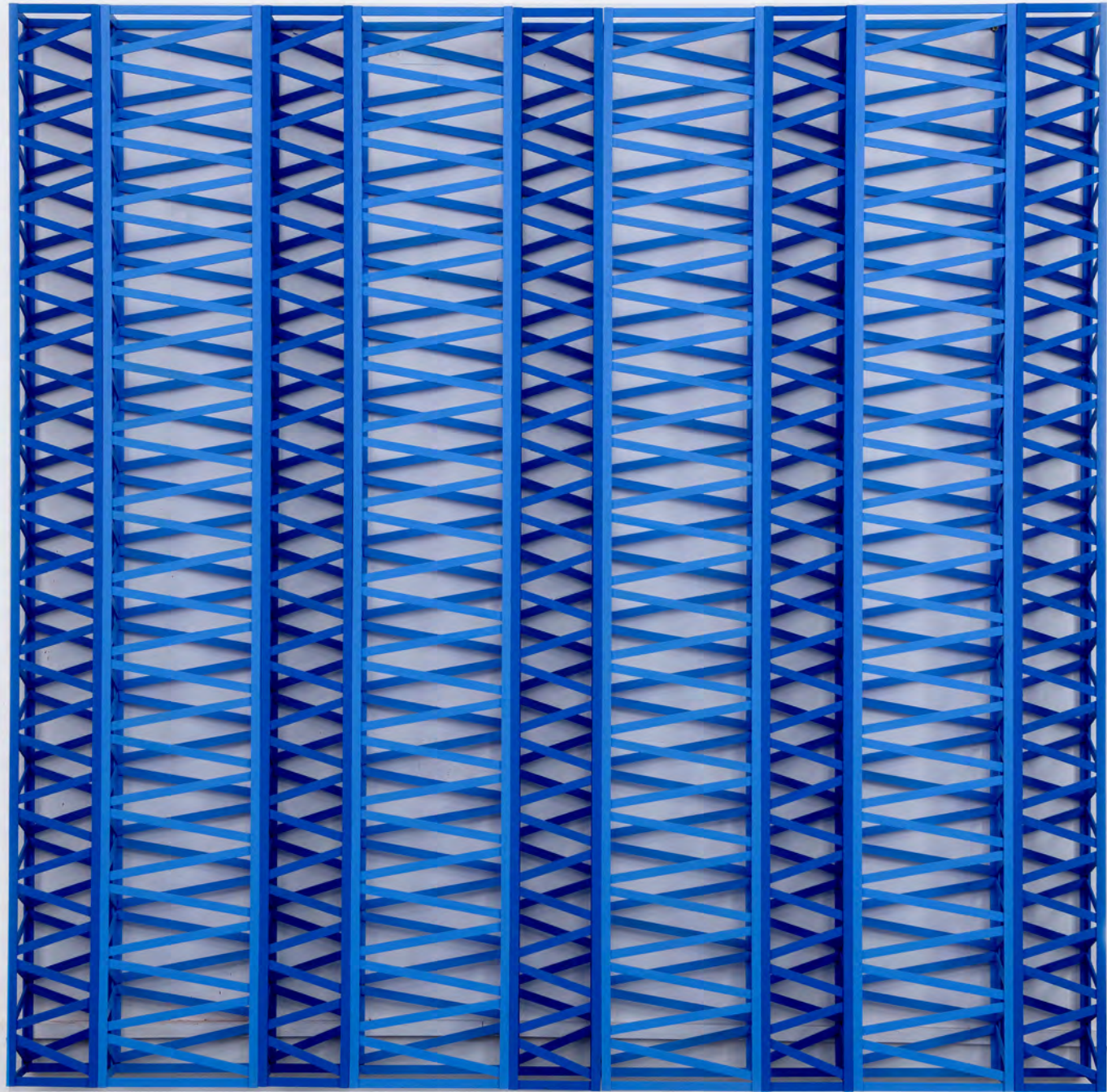
“When I showed my Minimalist work in London for the first time in 1970, the general response to it was that it was a form of Islamic art. Not only could I not accept this, but I had to struggle against this reading and understanding of my work.

“In 1970, I did not know anything about Islamic art, nor was I interested in it. My interest was in Modernism, and this was formed in Karachi as a result of my experiences of everyday life there and the knowledge of the work of artists in Pakistan, particularly the work of Zubeida Agha and Shakir Ali who had spent some time in Europe and had returned to Pakistan soon after its creation as an independent country separated from India. Both these artists brought with them Western forms of Modernism, and with their work they became the pioneers of Modernism in Pakistan. There was nothing Islamic about their work, nor did we have any Islamic monuments in Karachi.

“I can now reclaim my own Asian/Muslim identity, not by returning to my cultural roots but by placing my identity within the history which had been suppressed by the West, the very West which was awakened during the Renaissance with what it had received from the Islamic civilisation.”

RA interviewed by Stephanie Bailey, January 2016





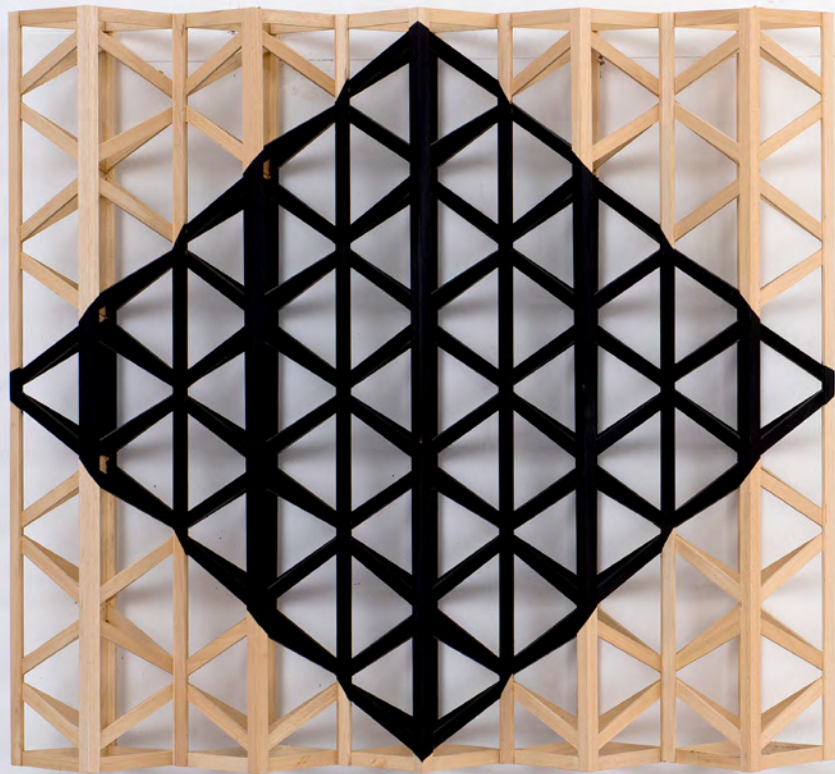
2. Rasheed Araeen, b. 1935

One Black Diamond, 2019

Acrylic on wood

80 x 87 x 18 cm

31 1/2 x 34 1/4 x 7 1/8 in



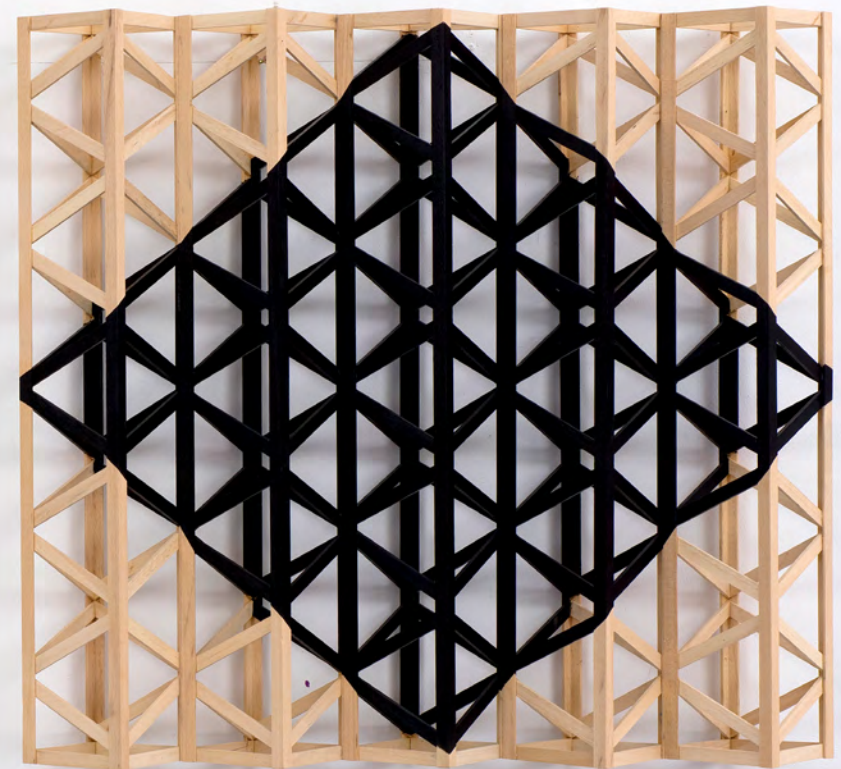
3. Rasheed Araeen, b. 1935

One Black Diamond, 2019

Acrylic on wood

80 x 87 x 18 cm

31 1/2 x 34 1/4 x 7 1/8 in



4. Rasheed Araeen, b. 1935

Small Blue, 2021

Signed and dated

Painted steel

60 x 25.5 x 25.5 cm

23 5/8 x 10 1/8 x 10 1/8 in

Edition of 5



5. Rasheed Araeen, b. 1935

The Greatness of Allah, 2021

Signed and dated on the back of one panel

Acrylic silkscreen on canvas

Unique

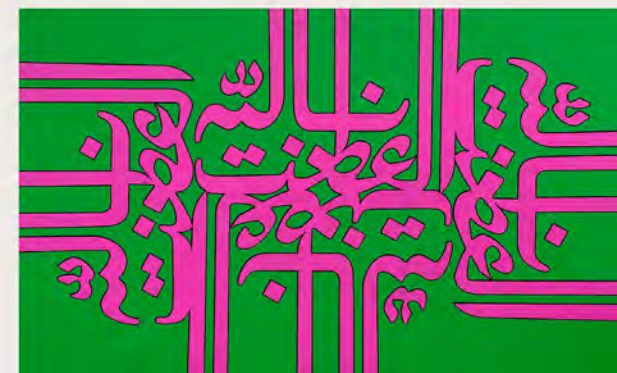
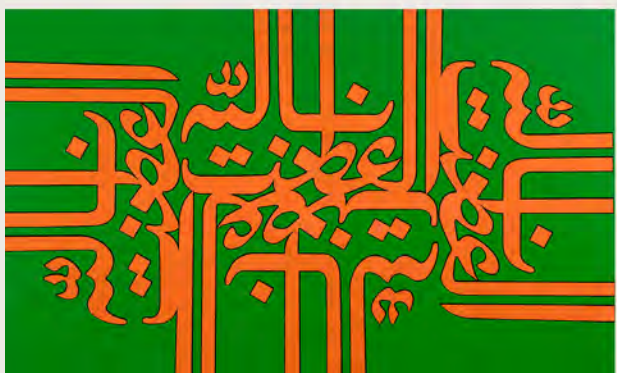
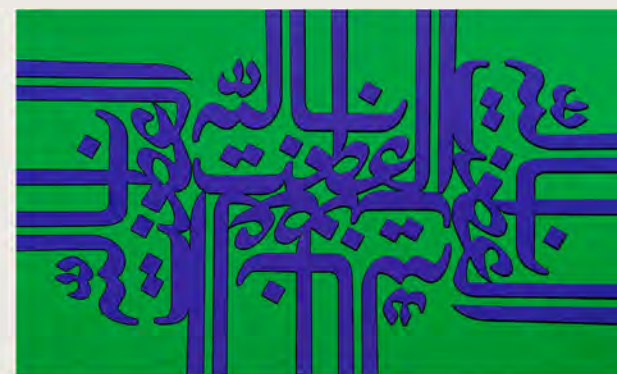
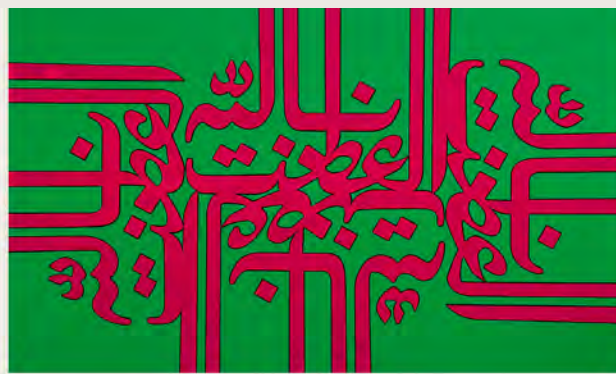
Each:

150 x 260 cm

(59 1/8 x 102 3/8 in)

“The global art world today is dominated by the art produced with the ideas originating in the West, and I don’t think it would be any different in Abu Dhabi. The aim of my work in Abu Dhabi is to depart from this dominant trend and present what is ‘Islamic’ but also modernist. It is not a kind of mixture which is common in the Arab/Muslim world, but is an original modernist work which enunciates and celebrates the spirit of Islam.”

“The audience of my work in Abu Dhabi should realize that there is no need for the Muslim artist to imitate or follow the West. There are enough ideas in the artistic traditions of Islam, which need not be imitated but can be reconstructed and renewed in the context of our modern world.”



BEYOND: ARTIST COMMISSIONS

Shamiyaana, Abu Dhabi, 2021

15 November 2021 onwards

The Cultural Foundation, Al Hosn, Abu Dhabi

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“Now in Abu Dhabi we will be restaging the Shamiyaana and inviting guests to share bread and be part of the Art Work. “

Rasheed Araeen, London, 2021

GROSVENOR GALLERY

فن
أبوظبي
abu dhabi
art

SHAMIYAANA

A Restaurant transformed into an artwork by Rasheed Araeen

The artwork was first created in Athens when the artist was invited to participate in Documenta 14, in 2017. The artist was given the opportunity to fulfill his ambition to produce an artwork which would allow people to be part of it, not as an audience but as its creative participants or partners. The artistic aim of Shamiyaana was therefore to bring all these people together; in fact, under one roof where they would meet, eat together and engage in conversations.

This was exactly what actually happened. People from all over the world, from different cultures and speaking different languages, tourists, art lovers or art audiences, refugees and immigrants, would meet the locals, rich and poor, sit on the same table and eat together; and, in fact, would try to talk to each other even when they could not speak and understand each other’s languages. Now in Abu Dhabi we will be restaging the Shamiyaana and inviting guests to share bread and to enjoy the artwork.

Opening Hours

Monday – Sunday
12 pm – 2 pm

Location

Cultural Foundation
Al Hosn – Abu Dhabi



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ERTH

Grosvenor
Gallery

Cultural
Foundation
المجمع
الثقافي

دائرة الثقافة والسياحة
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE
AND TOURISM



RASHEED ARRAEEEN



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